

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1        1.        A belt member, comprising a seam portion formed by overlapping and  
2        adhering both longitudinal end portions thereof to constitute an endless belt  
3        stretched and circulated by a rotative, first stretching member and a second  
4        stretching member,

5                wherein a length of the seam portion is no less than a length between  
6        a first point at which the endless belt is separated from one of the first  
7        stretching member and the second stretching member and a second point at  
8        which the endless belt is brought into contact with the other one of the first  
9        stretching member and the second stretching member.

1        2.        An image forming apparatus, comprising:

2                the belt member as set forth in claim 1;

3                a photosensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4        and

5                a transfer member, operable to transfer the toner image from the  
6        photosensitive member onto a recording medium transported by the belt  
7        member.

1        3.        An image forming apparatus, comprising:

2                the belt member as set forth in claim 1;

3                a photosensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4                a primary transfer device, operable to transfer a toner image from the

5        photosensitive member onto the belt member; and

6           a secondary transfer device, operable to transfer the toner image  
7       from the belt member onto a recoding medium.

1       4.       The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 3, further  
2       comprising a third stretching member and fourth stretching member which are  
3       arranged such that a circulating path of the belt member is made trapezoidal.

1       5.       An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
2               the belt member as set forth in claim 1;  
3               a heat generator, provided with the first stretching member; and  
4               a fixing member, arranged so as to abut against the first stretching  
5       member through the belt member, so that a toner image formed on a recording  
6       medium is fixed thereon when the recording medium is placed at a nip portion  
7       between the fixing member and the belt member.

1       6.       The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 5, further  
2       comprising a third stretching member and fourth stretching member which are  
3       arranged such that a circulating path of the belt member is made trapezoidal.

1       7.       The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 5, further  
2       comprising:  
3               a photo sensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;  
4       and  
5               a transfer member, operable to transfer the toner image from the  
6       photosensitive member onto a recording medium which is to be transported to

7 the nip position.

1 8. The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 5, further  
2 comprising:

3 a photosensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4 an intermediate transfer member;

5 a primary transfer device, operable to transfer a toner image from the  
6 photosensitive member onto the intermediate transfer member; and

7 a secondary transfer device, operable to transfer the toner image  
8 from the intermediate transfer member onto a recoding medium which is to be  
9 transported to the nip portion.

1 9. An image forming apparatus, comprising:

2 the belt member as set forth in claim 1; and

3 a fixing member, provided with a heat generator and arranged so as  
4 to abut against the first stretching member through the belt member, so that a  
5 toner image formed on a recording medium is fixed thereon when the  
6 recording medium is placed at a nip portion between the fixing member and  
7 the belt member.

1 10. The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 9, further  
2 comprising:

3 a photo sensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4 and

5 a transfer member, operable to transfer the toner image from the

6     photosensitive member onto a recording medium which is to be transported to  
7     the nip position.

1     11.     The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 9, further  
2     comprising:

3             a photosensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4             an intermediate transfer member;

5             a primary transfer device, operable to transfer a toner image from the  
6     photosensitive member onto the intermediate transfer member; and

7             a secondary transfer device, operable to transfer the toner image  
8     from the intermediate transfer member onto a recoding medium which is to be  
9     transported to the nip portion.

1     12.     The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 9, wherein the  
2     second stretching member has a semiannular shape.

1     13.     The belt member as set forth in claim 1, wherein the belt member is  
2     wound by a plurality of turns so that the length of the seam portion is made no  
3     less than a circumference of the endless belt.

1     14.     The belt member as set forth in claim 13, wherein the belt member is  
2     formed with a stepped portion through which both longitudinal ends of the belt  
3     member oppose to each other in a circumferential direction of the endless belt.

1 15. An image forming apparatus, comprising:

2 a rotative, first stretching member;

3 a second stretching member;

4 a belt member, comprising a seam portion formed by overlapping and  
5 adhering both longitudinal end portions thereof to constitute an endless belt  
6 stretched and circulated by the first stretching member and the second  
7 stretching member;

8 a fixing member, provided with a heat generator and arranged so as  
9 to abut against the first stretching member and the second stretching member  
10 through the belt member, so that a toner image formed on a recording medium  
11 is fixed thereon when the recording medium is placed at a nip portion between  
12 the fixing member and the belt member;

13 wherein a length of the seam portion is no less than a length between  
14 a first point at which the fixing member is abutted against the first stretching  
15 member through the belt member and a second point at which the fixing  
16 member is abutted against the second stretching member through the belt  
17 member.

1 16. The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 15, wherein the  
2 second stretching member has a semiannular shape.

1 17. The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 15, further  
2 comprising:

3 a photo sensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4 and

5           a transfer member, operable to transfer the toner image from the  
6    photosensitive member onto a recording medium which is to be transported to  
7    the nip position.

1    18.    The image forming apparatus as set forth in claim 15, further  
2    comprising:

3           a photosensitive member, operable to support a toner image thereon;

4           an intermediate transfer member;

5           a primary transfer device, operable to transfer a toner image from the  
6    photosensitive member onto the intermediate transfer member; and

7           a secondary transfer device, operable to transfer the toner image  
8    from the intermediate transfer member onto a recording medium which is to be  
9    transported to the nip portion.